

## SOCIOLOGY

**Morris, Cherry** (Editor). *Social Case-work in Great Britain*. London, 1951. Faber & Faber. Pp. 223. Price 12s. 6d.

THIS book describes the work of almoners, child-care workers, family case-workers in child guidance clinics and mental hospitals, moral welfare workers and probation officers. Each chapter has been written by a specialist in his or her own particular field, and the result is a stimulating survey of social science work in Great Britain.

The editor begins by emphasizing that the demand for social workers is greatly in excess of the supply. For although modern legislation has eliminated the need for large-scale financial relief our increased knowledge of psychology has shown us ways and means, not known before, by which we can help the misfits, the temperamentally unstable and those with personal difficulties of all kinds ; and consequently there is an ever-increasing demand for the services of those with the necessary psychological and social science training. Also, the greater complexity of social legislation since the war has shown the need for social workers to help in the implementation of the laws.

One of the best chapters is Mr. D. M. Deed's contribution on family case-work. He stresses the limitations imposed on the worker in this field by the lack of funds, since family case-work is still mainly dependent on voluntary subscriptions and donations. He also makes the point that the family case-worker is bound sooner or later to come up against the housing shortage, and gives three examples of the way in which inadequate accommodation is disrupting the harmony of the home. For instance, quarrels frequently occur between married couples obliged to share a house with the husband's or the wife's "in-laws." This is a state of affairs which the family case-worker can mitigate by tactfully given advice and understanding, but unless he can help the couple to find a

home of their own he cannot really eliminate the source of the disharmony. Another difficulty lies in the fact that many of the people in need of help live in the country where there is no worker available, and little can be done unless the worker has an opportunity of visiting the home.

Another vitally useful service is moral welfare work which two workers in this field, Barbara Reeve and Ena Steele, describe with a zest deriving from a strong Christian sense of vocation. Their work is partly concerned with the unmarried mother and children born illegitimately. The care which these children receive to-day is very different from the old days, when they were more often than not left to die in the streets.

The chapter on child care—on boarding officers, adoption of children, and the finding of foster-homes—is also an interesting one, but it would be useful to know if the author has any remedies for the shocking treatment to which children have often been subjected in these foster-homes, as is evident from the appalling cases recently cited in the Press. It is only fair to add, however, that she stresses the importance of far greater care in selecting the kind of home where there is likely to be a real compatibility between the child and its adoptive parents. Intelligence levels should obviously be similar, and even such apparently trivial matters as similarity of colouring and physique are important. Thus, a family adopted a boy and a girl, and the girl, because she was dark, which was the colouring of the family, was accepted as a member of the household ; whereas the boy, who was fair "looks all wrong in our family" (as the parents remarked).

This book is a heartening antidote to the times of stress and animosity in which we live. For it shows us the tremendous amount of sheer human goodness and altruism which exists in at least one sphere of human endeavour ; it also shows us how, during the last two or three hundred years, neglect and indifference have been replaced by compassion in dealing with the unfortunate, the weak, and the mentally unstable.

RICHARD RUMBOLD.